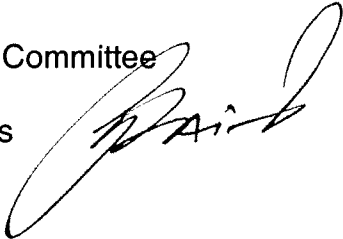




**TO:** Chair and Members of the Development Services Committee  
**FROM:** Jim Baird, Commissioner of Development Services  
**PREPARED BY:** Ron Blake, Development Manager, West District  
**DATE:** February 14, 2011  
**Re:** **Terms of Reference for the Thornhill Area Revitalization Working Group**



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**RECOMMENDATION:**

- 1) That the memorandum entitled: "Terms of Reference for the Thornhill Area Revitalization Working Group" be received;
- 2) That the Terms of Reference for the Thornhill Area Revitalization Working Group, attached as Appendix A to this memorandum, be endorsed;
- 3) And That staff be authorized to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

**BACKGROUND:**

**Area Context**

In November 2010, Staff met with Mayor Scarpitti and Councillor Shore to discuss matters related to the future of the John Street/Green Lane Corridor in Thornhill. At this meeting, staff were asked to prepare a terms of reference for a working group of area residents and members of the local business community, to provide input into the ongoing review of the John Street/Green Lane Corridor.

This area is bounded by two CN Rail lines to the west and south and the Aileen-Willowbrook neighbourhood to the north and east (see Figure 1 to Terms of Reference, attached as Appendix A to this memo). It is an older, mixed employment area comprised of service, retail and commercial uses and a variety of auto-oriented service and repair uses. The area also includes Raywall Kitchens, a kitchen cabinet manufacturer and the former Canac Kitchens site,

which is now vacant. The area has recently experienced transition, including the closure and demolition of the Canac Kitchens plant and a history of concerns about the impact of existing employment uses on adjacent residential areas.

### **Recent Studies**

The John Street/Green Lane Corridor is the subject of several on-going studies, as follows:

- The Thornhill Employment Area Land Use Study, initiated by Council in 2008, which is intended to examine options for updated Official Plan, Secondary Plan and Zoning By-law provisions to promote the transition of the existing employment area into a higher order business corridor, while addressing issues of compatibility with the surrounding residential areas. This study is currently in process.
- The John Street GO Station Feasibility Study, a joint study between Markham, Metrolinx and GO Transit, initiated at the Town's request, that is examining the feasibility, justification, requirements and cost estimates of developing a GO station at John Street on the Richmond Hill (north south) CN Rail line.
- The Town of Markham's Employment Lands Strategy, initiated in 2009, which reviews senior government policy, land requirements to achieve employment forecasts and updates the Town's policy framework for the provision and use of employment lands. Phase 1 of this study is nearing completion.

### **DISCUSSION:**

#### **Purpose and role of the Working Group**

The purpose of the Thornhill Area Revitalization Working Group is to provide detailed and focused input from local residents and the business community into the following matters:

- The existing policy context and implications of policy changes;
- Review options identified to date in the Thornhill Employment Area Study and consider other possible options for the evolution of the area, including possible mixed use and green employment opportunities;
- Examine opportunities to enhance the interface between new/existing employment uses and adjacent residential uses, in order to reduce land use conflicts;
- Disseminate this information back to the larger community.

In addition, the working group may provide input into future redevelopment within the John Street/Green Lane Corridor.

**Composition**

The Thornhill Area Revitalization Working Group will include 3 members from the surrounding residential community; 3 members from the local business community; Mayor Scarpitti; Councillor Shore (Chair); and members of the Thornhill Subcommittee. Staff from the Planning and Urban Design, Transportation and Engineering departments will provide support to the working group. Recording secretary services will be provided by the Clerk's Department.

**Schedule**

Members of the working group will be appointed for a one-year period, beginning in the first quarter of 2011. Staff expect that a maximum of 6 meetings will be held over the course of the appointment. Meetings will be at the call of the Chair.

**Conclusion**

Staff recommend that this memorandum be received and that the Terms of Reference for the Thornhill Area Revitalization Working Group, attached as Appendix A be endorsed.

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE THORNHILL AREA REVITALIZATION WORKING GROUP**

### **BACKGROUND**

The John Street / Green Lane Corridor is an older, mixed employment area located east of Bayview Avenue along Green Lane and John Street. The area is bounded by the north/south CN Rail line to the west; the east/west CN Rail line to the south and the Aileen-Willowbrook neighbourhood to the east and north (see Figure 1).

The Corridor contains a mix of land uses. The south end, between the east-west rail line and John Street, is characterized by a mix of service, retail and commercial uses, including a large self-storage establishment at the extreme south west corner of the Corridor that was developed some five years ago. The lands between John Street and the northern boundary of the Corridor (north of Green Lane) contains one large vacant employment site (the former Canac Kitchens) as well as a mix of service commercial and institutional uses fronting on the south side of Green Lane. Raywall Kitchens and a variety of auto oriented service and repair uses are located north of Green Lane along Guardsman Rd. and Harlech Ct.

### **LAND USE POLICIES**

The Province, Region of York and Markham have approved land use policies to guide development within the John Street / Green Lane Corridor. These policies are summarized in Appendix 'A' attached.

### **CURRENT STUDIES AFFECTING THE JOHN STREET / GREEN LANE CORRIDOR AREA**

#### **Town of Markham Employment Land Supply and Studies**

In 2009, the Town initiated an Employment Lands Strategy (ELS) Phase 1 Study to offer guidance in regard to Town decisions with respect to conforming to senior government policy, identifying land requirements to achieve employment forecasts and updating the Town's policy framework for the provision and use of employment lands. This ELS Phase 1 Study also supports the Economic Development Strategy, Building Markham's Future Together and the Growth Management Strategy. Based on the employment forecast set out in the ELS (Phase 1), the current supply of land for Employment Land Employment (ELE) is only sufficient to accommodate employment growth to 2016, after which the Town will begin to experience a shortfall in ELE land supply. Some 300 gross hectares of land outside Markham's current settlement area are expected to be needed for employment purposes, to be phased in over the period to 2031.

The Town is currently undertaking an Employment Area Intensification Study to determine how many of the additional ELE jobs allocated to the Town of Markham by the Region of York could be accommodated before 2031 on already-developed land existing within the current settlement area, rather than vacant lands within the current settlement area or lands outside the current settlement area. This Study is anticipated to be completed in early 2011.

Phase 2 of the Employment Lands Strategy is to begin in 2011. The focus of the Phase 2 will be to develop Official Plan policies for the upcoming new Town of Markham Official Plan. The endorsed Growth Alternative is the basis for the work on the new Town of Markham Official Plan.

### **Thornhill Employment Area Land Use Study**

On June 24, 2008, Council directed staff to provide options for updated Official Plan, Secondary Plan and Zoning By-law provisions to promote the transition of the existing employment area to a higher order Business Corridor, while addressing issues of compatibility with the surrounding residential neighbourhood. This was prompted by the closure of the Canac Kitchens plant, and the history of noise and odour impacts associated with this use and general concerns about the impact of existing employment uses on adjacent residential areas.

The Town has retained Meridian Planning Consultants to undertake the study. To date, the consulting team has reviewed the existing policy framework and zone provisions and has prepared an inventory of existing business uses in order to establish baseline information and identify trends in business development / types of uses in the area. The study has also reviewed the emerging policy framework at the Provincial, Regional and local level to determine how the policy and regulatory framework could be designed to support the evolution of the existing employment area into a higher order employment area and to assess the extent to which use permissions might be broadened to provide for as many opportunities for sustainable job creation as possible.

To date, a draft Policy Options Report has been prepared which presents the following options:

1. Maintain the Status Quo
2. Refine Use Permissions or Introduce Special Setbacks for obnoxious uses
3. Create a New OP / Secondary Plan Designation
4. Adopt and Interim Control By-law
5. Consider a New Direction

The report identifies an approach that involves refining the uses and the addition of appropriate uses to support the intensification of the employment area. The report states, “the planned function of the area should be refreshed with a view to clearly articulating that the planned function is service commercial / employment.” It also highlights the emphasis within the Provincial Growth Plan to protect the long-term employment land base from conversion of land to non-employment uses.

The Policy Options Report (third draft) was prepared in September 2009. However, since the Town is also undertaking a broader Employment Lands Strategy (see discussion above), which is a key component of the Town’s Official Plan review, the report acknowledges that it would be premature to add a new designation into the Official Plan prior to the conclusion of the Employment Lands Strategy.

No further work has been done specific to the Thornhill Employment Area since October 2009 and the draft report has not been presented to Development Services Committee.

## **John Street GO Station Feasibility Study**

The Town of Markham has requested Metrolinx and Go Transit to undertake a feasibility study for a Go Commuter Station on the Richmond Hill (north-south) line in the John Street/Green Lane area of Thornhill. The study will review the following:

- The need / justification for a station;
- Interim and ultimate station requirements;
- Property requirements;
- Cost estimates

Go transit has advised they will be in a position to start the study later in 2011 when they receive budget approval.

## **THORNHILL AREA REVITALIZATION WORKING GROUP**

There is now an opportunity to provide for additional public consultation regarding the Options report and the future of the John Street / Green Lane Corridor, by establishing a Working Group, with membership from both the local neighbourhood and the local employment community, to provide input and advice into the next phases of the Thornhill Area Revitalization Study.

### **Composition of working group**

The Thornhill Area Revitalization Working Group (TARWG) will consist of the following members:

- 3 residents from the surrounding local community;
- 3 representatives from businesses operating in the employment area;
- Mayor Frank Scarpitti;
- Councillor Howard Shore (chair);
- Members of the Thornhill Subcommittee
- Staff support will include representatives from Development Planning; Urban Design; Policy Planning; Transportation; and Engineering;
- Recording secretary services will be provided by the Clerk's Department.

### **Purpose and role of the working group**

The purpose and role of the TARWG is to provide detailed and focused input from local residents and the business community into the ongoing Thornhill Employment Area Study. More specifically, the primary role of TARWG will be to consider the following matters:

- Understand the policy context and implications of policy changes;
- Review of the options set out in the Policy Options Report discussed above;
- Review and provide input into future phases of the Study;
- Consider other possible options for the evolution of the area including possible mixed use; and the promotion of less noxious (cleaner) uses by building on Markham's Green Print strategy, green building standards, and green community standards;

- Consider matters associated with enhancing the interface between new/existing employment uses and adjacent residential uses, in order to reduce conflicts between these uses, enhance the adjacent residential uses and enhance the viability of the employment lands;
- Relay information on the progress of the Study back to the larger community.

In addition to the above primary role, the TARWG may provide input into future redevelopment proposals within the John Street / Green Lane Corridor, as may be submitted during the period of appointment of the Working Group.

Staff will schedule a series of working group meetings at key times during the course of the Study, and during the review of the anticipated future redevelopment proposal on the Canac Kitchens site. The working group meetings are intended to complement broader community information meetings and public meeting(s), which will also form part of the Study process and the review of development applications in the area, by providing a forum for more in-depth and focused discussion.

### **Reporting Procedure**

TARWG meeting notes will be posted on the Town of Markham website. Meeting notes will be prepared by Town of Markham staff in draft form, for review by working group members at the next meeting, prior to posting on the Town's website.

### **Remuneration**

None

### **Schedule of meetings**

The schedule of meetings will be finalized through the work program of the Thornhill Employment Area Study and will be at the discretion of the chair. Staff expect that a maximum of 6 meetings will be held. Meetings will start and end at designated times, and will not exceed 2.5 hours in duration.

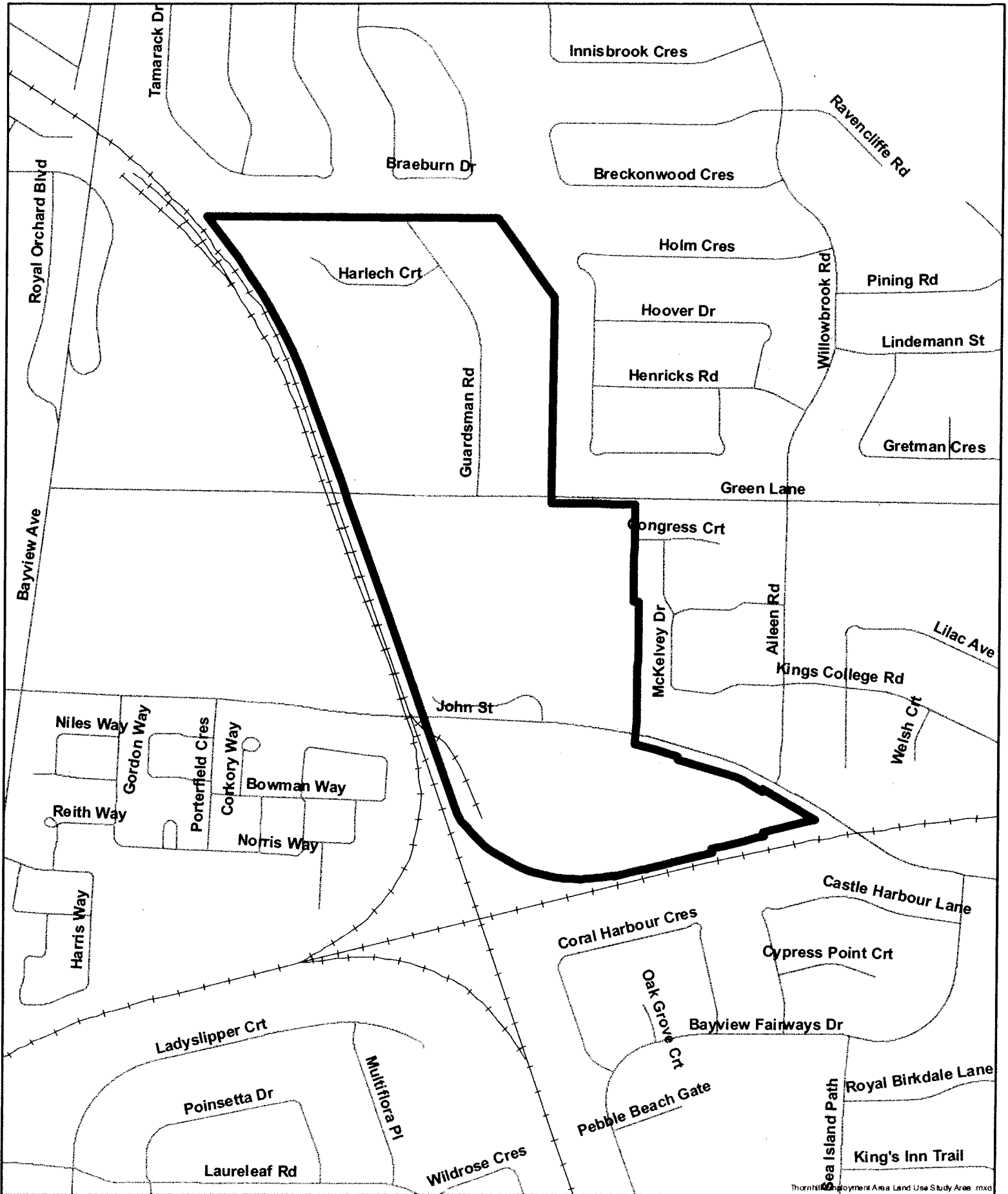
### **Duration of appointment**

The appointment will be for a one year period, beginning in the first quarter of 2011.

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

Figure 1 – Thornhill Employment Area Land Use Study Area

Appendix 'A' – Land Use Policies



Thornhill Employment Area Land Use Study Area.mxd

 Thornhill Employment Area Land Use Study Area



## APPENDIX A

### LAND USE POLICIES

#### **Provincial Land Use Policy Context for Employment Lands**

A new policy context for employment lands has been created by the introduction of the Provincial Policy Statement, followed by the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, and the revised Ontario Planning Act. This policy framework mandates municipalities to provide and protect sufficient land to accommodate competitive opportunities for employment growth, while promoting intensification and mixed-use development, all within the context of sustainable, complete communities and long term economic prosperity. Markham's Official Plan and development decisions must be in conformity with the new policy direction set out in these documents. The intent of the revised legislation is to protect and preserve municipal employment land from incompatible uses.

**Section 2.2.6.2** of the Provincial Growth Plan establishes the new policy context for providing and maintaining a healthy supply of employment land, stating that -

*"Municipalities will promote economic development and competitiveness by -*

- a) providing for an appropriate mix of employment uses including industrial, commercial and institutional uses to meet long term needs;*
- b) providing opportunities for a diversified economic base, including maintaining a range and choice of suitable sites for employment uses which support a wide range of economic activities and ancillary uses, and take into account the needs of existing and future businesses;*
- c) planning for, protecting and preserving employment areas for current and future uses;*
- d) ensuring the necessary infrastructure is provided to support current and forecasted employment needs."*

Under this specific policy, municipalities will need to ensure that "sufficient" employment lands are available over the long term to support new jobs anticipated to 2031.

While the preservation of employment land is intended to be an important policy thrust, municipalities are afforded the opportunity under the Provincial Growth Plan, if needed, to permit conversions of employment land, provided that such lands (or a portion thereof) are not required or developable for employment purposes. Before a municipality can approve the conversion of employment land, it must first complete a Municipal Comprehensive Review. The completion of a Municipal Comprehensive Review must be undertaken by the municipality and must meet six criteria, as set out in Section 2.2.6.5:

- "a) There is a need for the conversion*
- b) The municipality will meet the employment forecasts allocated to the municipality pursuant to [the] Plan*

- c) *The conversion will not adversely affect the overall viability of the employment area, the achievement of intensification target, density targets and other policies of [the] Plan*
- d) *There is existing or planned infrastructure to accommodate the proposed conversion*
- e) *The lands are not required over the long term for the employment purposes for which they are designated*
- f) *Cross jurisdictional issues have been considered.*

*For the purposes of the policy, major retail uses are considered non employment uses."*

Conversions of employment land will need to be considered within the context of the baseline employment forecasts of the Provincial Growth Plan. The underlying policy basis for permitting a conversion must be grounded in a reasonable expectation of how much employment growth – vis-à-vis the new jobs allocated to the Town of Markham to 2031 – could be accommodated within the Town, and the extent to which vacant lands are needed to fulfill a certain portion of the total job growth that could only be accommodated in employment areas.

### **Region of York Land Use Policy Framework for Employment Areas**

The Region of York's new Official Plan (ROP) was approved with modifications by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing in September 2010. The ROP conforms to the Growth Plan and the Provincial Policy Statement.

The ROP allocates almost 250,000 employees to the Town of Markham by 2031 – nearly 90,000 more jobs than are accommodated today. The ROP requires that the employment forecasts within the ROP document be used as the basis for planning for employment lands within local Official Plans.

The ROP also requires local municipalities to protect, maintain and enhance the long term viability of all employment lands designated for employment uses as well as to protect strategic employment lands. Additionally, there are also policies dealing with conversion of employment to non-employment uses (defined as residential, major retail and non ancillary uses), and policies which limit the amount of ancillary uses within employment areas to not more than 20% collectively. Furthermore, there are also policies which encourage walkable transit accessible development of employment lands, the diversity of parcel sizes within employment areas, a minimum average density, and require municipalities to review and monitor opportunities for intensification.

The ROP requires local official plans and comprehensive zoning by-laws to be brought into conformity with the Region's Official Plan in a timely manner. Policies in the local official plans or secondary plans may be more restrictive than the ROP, provided such policies are consistent with the general intent of the ROP. Conformity factors include conformity with Provincial plans, statutes and regulations, consistency between overall direction and long term objectives, and reasonable efforts to accommodate matters identified in the policies of the ROP.

Regional Official Plan Amendment No.3 (ROPA 3) amended the ROP to incorporate an urban expansion area in Markham to accommodate a portion of the Town's forecast urban growth to

the year 2031. ROPA3 incorporates the addition of land outside the current settlement area to accommodate employment and population projections to 2031. The area identified for expansion is consistent with the Growth Alternative endorsed by Markham Council.

### **Town of Markham Official Plan and Zoning**

The majority of the Thornhill Employment Area, except for the northernmost portion adjacent to Harlech Court, is designated Business Corridor Area – John Street / Green Lane by the Thornhill Secondary Plan (OPA 1). The intent of this designation is to recognize the variety of employment and service uses within the employment area and to encourage the gradual evolution of the area by narrowing the range of permitted industrial uses and broadening the range of non-industrial uses to include certain institutional and commercial uses through the rezoning process.

The Secondary Plan provides for offices, light industrial, ancillary retail, service, recreation, restaurants, research and training facilities, data processing, and commercial schools. Retail uses are limited to a maximum floor area of 1,000 m<sup>2</sup> except for computer and office supplies, which may be up to a maximum of 3,000 m<sup>2</sup>. The Secondary Plan also provides for private clubs and automotive commercial uses involving repairs or alterations, subject to a rezoning application. Office uses are limited to the John St. and Green Lane frontages. Outdoor storage and industrial uses that create adverse impacts such as noise, fumes, vibration or lights are prohibited, as are transportation terminals, outside processing or material handling, automobile dealerships, and vehicle renting or leasing. The Secondary Plan also contains policies and criteria intended to ensure that new employment uses located near residential areas are compatible with and do not negatively impact the amenity of these residential areas. Considerations include an assessment of traffic impacts; hours of operation; noise, dust, fumes, odours, vibration and lighting impacts; and separation, buffering and screening from residential areas.

The north end of the employment area, in the vicinity of Harlech Court, is designated General Industrial in the Thornhill Secondary Plan. The intent of this designation is to encourage the gradual evolution of this area by broadening the range of non-industrial uses including certain institutional and commercial uses permitted through a rezoning process, and by requiring site improvements and upgrades. The Secondary Plan provides for industrial uses, data processing, self-storage warehouses, ancillary office and factory sales, research and training, restaurants and recreational uses. Additional uses such as day care centres, banquet halls, service stations, private and commercial schools, offices, auto repair, contractor's yards and controlled outdoor storage may be permitted subject to rezoning. Stand-alone retail, funeral homes, residential and night clubs are prohibited.

The majority of the lands in the employment area are zoned Industrial (M) by By-law 77-73. This zoning by-law permits warehousing, assembly, manufacture or repair within enclosed buildings, commercial and technical schools, and private clubs. Stand-alone residential uses are prohibited.